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WOMAN SCHOLAR**

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In a male-dominated society, that which is claimed to be universal or public is equivalent to a male language or a male epistemology. Men are able to discuss and define politics, religion, philosophy, the sciences, etc., while women, who are defined as the gender incapable of objective or rational thought, are usually excluded from participation in public discourse. This exclusionary premise has been challenged over and over again by feminists in the West and in the East. Nevertheless, the division into male=public=objective and female=private=emotional persists. Women are still left out of the public sector, and those women who manage to enter a traditionally male sphere are often subjected to difficulties that their male counterparts are not. One of these difficulties is the conflict women feel between their traditionally defined gender roles and their personal hopes and ambitions. This paper discusses this conflict in the context of the life of Takamure Itsue, a Japanese woman scholar.

Although the value of her scholarly contribution is yet to be acknowledged by mainstream historical studies in Japan, Takamure Itsue (1894-1964) left a valuable legacy as the first woman historian in Japan to leave behind volumes of books on women's history. The role conflict that is typically experienced by academic women is magnified in Takamure's case by the intersection of contemporary political developments in Japan and her own personal growth. Throughout Takamure's lifetime, Japanese society was undergoing very fundamental social and cultural changes as it made the transition from an extreme form of traditional, feudal Confucian patriarchy to a modern democracy. The life of Takamure Itsue manifests the contradictions and confusions felt by the Japanese, and particularly women, of that post-reformation period.

In section one, we will outline the socio-historical backdrop of Takamure's life, a time when Japan had just opened its doors to the world and was hastening to catch up with the West. In section two, we will focus on the development of a Japanese women's movement. In the remaining sections, we will discuss the life of Takamure Itsue with particular emphasis on the conflicts Takamure felt as she struggled to reconcile her roles of wife and scholar.

Socio-Historical Background

Takamure Itsue was born in 1894, the first year of the Sino-Japanese War. It was a time when Japanese society as a whole was shifting from a centralized feudal society towards democracy. At the same time, the Japanese government was expanding upon its ambition to compete with the Western nations in the world market. The Japanese people, who had been accustomed to the oppression of the feudal order, rapidly became aware of other democratic changes taking place throughout the world. They read about the French Revolution, the Emancipation Proclamation in the United States and the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, and books representing Western thought were quickly translated and published. (The translation of Marx's *The Capital* was published in 1868, the year of the Meiji Restoration.) Japanese people's awareness of democratic rights grew rapidly after the preliminary birth pains of its new social order. The political climate in Japan during this period may be comparable, in a sense, to that of the United States during the civil rights movements in the 1950's and 1960's. People in cities and villages, of the upper intellectual classes or of the rural peasant classes, were influenced in one way or another by these changes. Many hoped for a better and more humane life.

Young women from poor families in rural areas began to work in cotton and textile factories, dreaming that they might finally be able to become financially independent. It has been well documented, however, that work conditions were such that very few of them made their dream come true. At the time, there were no decent jobs at all for women of the middle and upper classes. While women had hoped to reap the benefits of change, their exclusion when Universal (Male) Suffrage was established in 1925, made it obvious that equality pertained to men only. Women had to wait until the end of World War

II to gain the right to vote.

In 1925, the same year that the Universal (Male) Suffrage Law passed, the Diet passed the Peace Preservation Law, an extremely repressive law which made it a crime to advocate social changes that might have an impact on the basic social system. Expressions of feminist ideologies of any radical nature became illegal under this law. Many leaders of social movements, including women's movements, were arrested, put in jail and persecuted during this period.

Takamure Itsue and Women's Movements

One fundamental area of social change at this time was the growth of an early feminist movement which also experienced the conflicts and contradictions of this very turbulent period in Japanese history. The transition from feudal to modern Japan, and the importation of Western ideologies, brought with it challenges to the traditional view of women and gender roles. Under traditional Confucianism in feudal, or pre-modern, Japan, women played a very subordinate role in public and private life. The values with which women and men were raised reinforced Confucian ideas such as those expressed in the following passage from *Onna Daigaku* [Great Lessons for Women]. This very influential work, written during the Edo period, was used as a textbook for women's education even in the Meiji period.

A woman has no particular master. She must consider her husband her true master, and respectfully take service under him. She should not make little of him nor hold him in contempt. She must be gentle and faithful. She should never offend him. Women's virtue is obedience. She should talk and behave humbly and docilely towards her husband. Never be defiant or resistant. Never be arrogant or rude. This is the first duty of women.

(*Onna Daigaku*)

The first influx of feminist thought occurred in the 1870's and 1880's, in correlation with the social changes brought about by the Meiji Restoration and the introduction of the Meiji Civil Codes. In 1911, feminist Hiratsuka Raicho (1886-1971) wrote, "In the beginning, woman was the sun," in the first issue of the feminist journal entitled *Seito* (Blue Stocking). Through this famous and very frequently quoted passage, Raicho defied

the traditional patriarchal view of women as the passive, weaker sex, the moon to the male sun. Recalling the Japanese creation myth, in which the sun is personified as a female, Raicho asserted the power of women. Raicho's declaration was a bold challenge to the prevailing Confucian view of women, and it represented the beginning of a feminist deconstruction of traditional gender roles.

Takamure Itsue attempted to support Raicho's argument for the central role of women in primitive Japan through a "scientifically rigorous method" of study of Japanese women's history, to which she devoted the latter half of the 70 years of her life. There is no doubt that, as Takamure wrote in *Josei no Rekishi* (A History of Women), Raicho was her inspiration. As a young woman, Takamure Itsue was first a poet and social critic, contributing hundreds of poems and essays. Later she became actively involved in various feminist movements. In 1931, at the age of 37, she completely disassociated herself from feminist activities and began to devote herself entirely to researching women's history, with her husband as a dedicated research assistant.

As a historian Takamure published: *Boketsei no Kenkyu* [Research on the Matrilineal System, 1938], *Shoseikon no Kenkyu* [Research on Uxorilocal Marriage, 1953], *Josei no Rekishi* [A History of Women - 4 vols, 1954-58] and *Nihon Kon'in-shi* [The History of Marriage in Japan, 1963] in addition to compiling *Dai Josei Jimmei Jisho* [The Unabridged Biographical Dictionary of Japanese Women, 1936]. Each of these works, with the exception of *Nihon Kon'in-shi*, were voluminous and based upon her original research.

How was it possible for Takamure Itsue, as a woman, to achieve so much as a scholar in a time when women's roles were still by and large defined in terms of the patriarchal, Confucian world view? In the following section, we would like to focus on Takamure's life, rather than on her theories, for we believe that her life provides us with a compelling example of the conflicts that women scholars inevitably experience in a patriarchal society where women are defined as incapable of objective and rational thought and intellectual pursuits.

Confucian Education and the "New Woman"

Takamure Itsue was born on January

18, 1894, to an elementary schoolmaster and his wife in a rural area of Kumamoto prefecture, on the Japanese island of Kyushu. Takamure's scholar father endeavored to educate his daughter, and the atmosphere of learning he provided was a valuable inspiration to Takamure both as a child and adult. Her father encouraged Takamure's education, even teaching her classical Chinese, a traditionally male discipline. This exceptional early education prepared Takamure to read books and articles which were read by the predominantly male intellectual minority, while at the same time it also taught her patriarchal Confucian values and traditional gender roles.

Although her heart's desire after elementary school was to go to a private girls' high school and then to college to learn to be a writer, Takamure knew that her family was too poor to provide such an education. Takamure realistically planned to go to a government-subsidized normal school and fulfill her father's dream that she would become an elementary school teacher. At the time, work as a teacher was one of the few career options for women.

When she finished her first eight years of public schooling, Takamure had to wait for one year before reaching the eligible age to sit for the entrance exam for the prefectural normal school. During that year, Takamure attended a prep school for girls. Since this prep school was formerly a Chinese Study School, it provided Takamure with additional traditional education in Chinese from Confucian scholars much like her father.

Takamure, being a good student, must have learned the lessons given by her father and teachers more thoroughly than the average child her age. There are signs that her early education with the Confucian principle of "*Dan-Son, Jo-Hi*" ["Men Superior, Women Inferior"] affected her throughout her life. However, the majority of people in the community where Takamure grew up were commoners not subjected to the rigid Confucian culture of higher class people with samurai warrior backgrounds. The relationships between women and men in her village were much more open than those of people more thoroughly educated and socialized in Confucian values. The villagers retained the customs of *shuudan-kon* (group or open marriage) and *tsumadot-kon* (wife-visiting marriage), which Takamure later recognized as remnants of Ancient Japanese culture, which

was more or less women-centered.

At the age of fifteen, Takamure finally entered the Kumamoto Prefectural Normal School. Her academic standing in the Normal School was excellent, but she was marked a "dangerous" student by normal school teachers due to her inquisitiveness and passion for knowledge and truth. During this period in Japanese history, the government was becoming increasingly repressive, and the normal schools were used as a tool to control the independent and creative thinking of youths. Takamure was too independent a thinker to fit in as a normal school student. While she was recuperating from severe *beri beri*, she was forced to withdraw from school.

In 1912, at the age of 18, Takamure entered the fourth year class of Kumamoto Girls' School, a private school which would have prepared her for the certification exam to qualify as an elementary school teacher. This school had formerly been an English language school and it had Christian teachers. In a way it was similar to a missionary school. Looking back upon her year at the Kumamoto School, Takamure writes:

While normal school education was to mold people into a particular pattern, this school was designed to give an education of love and peace, it was a place where students and teachers were trained to fulfill their potential. I strongly felt that the primary purpose of this school was to give humanistic education. (*Hi no Kuni*, p. 106)

The school offered classes in literary criticism and the Western classics. Takamure also learned the value of scientific studies at this school. It is clear that, while she had been raised with an education in the Chinese classics and Confucian philosophy, and that she may, perhaps, have internalized Confucian values, Takamure was readily attracted to Western writings during this period.

After a year in Kumamoto Girls' School she applied for the exam to obtain a certificate for teaching in an elementary school. She wanted to teach to make money to help her father send her brothers to school. Takamure apparently felt that, as a female, pursuing her own education was not important and could be sacrificed in order to provide a proper education for her brothers. It seems that Itsue had internalized this patriarchal value and honestly wanted to help her father send his sons to good schools. However, due to a mistake in the application procedure,

Takamure failed to sit for the certification exam. Her personal disappointment was not as great as her regret for having disappointed her father. Without telling her family, Takamure left home to spend the next four months working in a cotton mill.

Her behavior in choosing to leave home is somewhat enigmatic. In retrospect she wrote, "The purpose of leaving was to provide financial assistance to send my brothers to school" (*Hi no Kuni*, p. 114). Her need to leave home can be viewed as a coping mechanism in the face of the conflict she may have already been experiencing between the Confucian world view she was learning from her father and teachers and her growing intuitive appreciation of the old customs she observed among the villagers. As we will see in the following section, running away from home was a temporary resolution which became a pattern repeated later whenever Takamure was torn between what was traditionally thought appropriate for a woman and what she desired to be as a human being.

Working conditions in Japanese spinning mills at this time resembled the worst kind of slavery, and Takamure was unable to tolerate the situation silently. She wrote articles criticizing the paternalistic lectures given to the factory workers by the employers. The employers silenced her protests by sending her back to her parents' home, saying that the mills were no place for the educated daughter of a schoolmaster.

Upon returning home after leaving the spinning mill, Takamure was employed as a teaching assistant at her father's school, where she remained for three years. Among the library books, there were new publications including Hiratsuka Raicho's first book *Marumado yori* [*From A Circular Window*], the sale of which was prohibited due to charges of "destruction of the family system" and "disruption of social order". Although it is likely that Takamure was interested in Raicho's criticism of Japan's patriarchal family system, at this time she was still under the strong influence of her father, a dedicated educator, and dreaming of becoming a teacher at a rural elementary school.

At the end of 1916, as the result of an essay she contributed to a Kumamoto education magazine, Takamure began correspondence with Hashimoto Kenzo, a teacher in a mountain village not far from where she lived. In late August of the next year, she finally met Kenzo at a summer conference for teachers.

Marriage and Writing

The relationship between Takamure and Kenzo began when Kenzo sent a letter requesting her permission to publish, in a journal circulated among a small group of literary people, a short essay by Takamure which had been previously published in an educational journal. Takamure, enraptured by his interest in her work, felt that Kenzo, who apparently thought highly of her writing, would be her life-long companion. She held the romantic idea that she "should live with Kenzo, being guided by him and adjusting her life to his" (*Hi no Kuni*, p. 128). She also wrote:

It was a strange experience indeed. I had never been so charmed and refreshed by a man's naked egoism and his vulgarness, which were shamelessly shown to me as this time. Also, at no other time were my weaknesses — my old-fashioned sense of virtue, imbecility, thick-headedness, schizophrenia, etc — all exposed by his sadistic acts and his rude comments, to some degree showing his superiority, as at this time. (*Hi no Kuni* p. 127)

Kenzo did not romantically respond to Itsue, although the fact was revealed later that Kenzo was actually deeply interested in Takamure from the beginning of their acquaintance. In order to forget about this unrequited love, Takamure decided to become a writer for a newspaper in the city of Kumamoto and write about social problems, such as children sold to spinning mills and poverty in rural areas. She went on a pilgrimage from June 4 to November 22, 1918, and wrote more than 100 travel reports to the newspaper. However, upon returning home from this pilgrimage, she found herself again love-sick for Kenzo.

Kenzo gradually responded to Takamure's overtures, and the two were engaged in April, 1919, after which they lived together for the next three months. This arrangement, however, proved problematic, and Takamure returned home to live with her parents. After writing prolifically for almost a year, inspired in part by her trouble with Kenzo, Takamure moved to Tokyo in August, 1920, to attempt a career as a writer and poet.

In the April, 1921, edition of *Shin Shosetsu* [*New Novels*] Takamure published her poem "*Nichigetsu no ue ni*" ["Above the Sun and Moon"], and in June a poetry collection by the same name, as well as *Horosha no Shi* [*A Wanderer's Poems*] were published. In

these collections of poetry, and particularly in *Nichigetsu no ue ni*, Takamure began to illustrate her romantic ideals through her writing. Initially, Takamure published poetry and essays which were not particularly subversive or feminist. However, through her experiences of difficulty in her relationship with Kenzo, and her involvement in social movements, Takamure began to question the prevailing Confucian principle of "*Dan-son, Jo-hi*" ["Men Superior, Women Inferior"]. Her writing developed from love poetry, which focused on her conflicts with Kenzo, to more mature social criticism through which she attempted to place her marital problems into the larger context of the Japanese marriage system, the nature of love and the oppression of women.

These early publications of Takamure's poetry were well received, and she was beginning to show some success when Kenzo visited her in June, 1921. Although her publisher advised her not to leave Tokyo, Kenzo convinced Takamure to go with him to the seacoast in Kumamoto, where the two spent the next eight months alone together. During this time, Takamure became pregnant and the two moved back to Tokyo in anticipation of the birth. Tragically, the baby was stillborn on April 10, 1922. Takamure was unable to become pregnant again after this.

When the couple was finally able to move out of boarding houses and into their own home in Tokyo, friends of Kenzo, new to Tokyo or out of work, would reside at the Takamure home. While Kenzo was out working at a publishing house during the day, Takamure found herself playing unwilling hostess to Kenzo's guests. Although Takamure's writing career was accepted as a necessary form of income, Kenzo also expected Takamure to fulfill her traditional role of housewife.

Kenzo appears to have been insensitive to Takamure's situation, and even to have been abusive. In her diary written in 1924, she writes for example,

October 6: Today's recollections — I talked back to my husband. The regular players of *hanafuda* (Japanese playing cards) came and my husband ordered me to go and buy sake for them. I retorted that I couldn't because I was writing. My husband scolded me and I talked back to him. I am sorry. I was wrong.

(*Hi no Kuni*, p. 209)

October 12: Cannot work because too many guests showed up. The host [Kenzo] and his guests played cards. Went on errands to a soba-shop, a tobacco shop, and a dessert shop. I cannot mix with them. How sad! They always make dirty jokes, which I am not skilled at, and talk about getting away with cheats.

(*Hi no Kuni*, p. 209)

Nov. 25: Today's recollections - My husband was in a bad mood. He said that the two of us are strangers. He told me again to get out of the house. Then, because he hit me, Morita stopped him. Where should I go?

(*Hi no Kuni*, p. 210)

Kenzo mistreated her, and even beat her. Nevertheless, Takamure had a difficult time leaving him. Since she could not think of changing her husband, she always ended up blaming herself.

While Takamure had attained a certain level of feminist consciousness as she struggled personally and as a writer to understand the nature of her conflicts with Kenzo in the context of the marriage system, she seems to have felt torn by the conflict between her own beliefs about the nature of love and her socialization as a Japanese woman. Takamure was trapped between new social ideas resulting from modernization and her very traditional, Confucian upbringing. In a pattern which remained consistent throughout the early years of their marriage, Takamure tried many times to make the marriage work, sacrificing her needs and values time and again as she struggled to be a model wife to Kenzo. It seems tragic and ironic that while she struggled to be a "good wife," Takamure continued to write that marriage should be a partnership based upon unity of spirit and purpose.

Takamure's situation may have been extreme, but it was not particularly unique to her. Contemporary feminist writers (e.g., Adrienne Rich, 1979, and Dale Spender, 1985) discuss women writers' working conditions under a patriarchal order. They argue that men's writing is considered important and valuable, enabling men to concentrate on their writing while being served by women. Women's writing, on the other hand, is considered a hobby and not a legitimate occupation. Therefore, women have neither undivided time to write nor appropriate workspace for writing.

At a time when feminists were questioning the validity of the traditional, patriarchal ideology, many women, like Takamure, felt trapped between their new ideologies and their traditional upbringings and values. Takamure felt unable to confront Kenzo with her dissatisfaction with the expectations she felt weighing upon her, and she blamed herself for her inability to be an ideal wife. The situation, however, became increasingly intolerable and she began to think of running away from the difficulty. She wrote in her diary, dated December 6, 1924:

I will leave home before next spring. In the meantime, I will energetically serve my husband and his acquaintances. "If I am successful in serving him in this way, won't he want me throughout his life? Isn't it possible that I could become that kind of me?" The strength of these temptations is frightening. Although I am reluctant, I think it is best for the two of us if I leave. (Hi no Kuni, p. 211)

The inner conversation which Takamure has with herself in this passage expresses the split that she feels between the prevailing women's role of dutiful wife and her desire to express herself, learn, study and do research. Given today's understanding of the nature of spouse abuse, what we see in these diary passages is typical of an abused wife. It may strike the reader as strange that Takamure does not express her experiences in terms of feelings anger with Kenzo or humiliation at these affronts. Rather, she repeatedly blames herself, and admonishes herself to try harder to be a good wife. Unfortunately, in Takamure's time, rather than perceiving the husband as at fault in this situation, the wife would have been blamed for inadequacy. Most relationships between husband and wife were even worse than this. Out of her frustration with Kenzo, Takamure is sometimes tempted to accept the traditional role of wife, which was part of the socialization she received through her education in Confucianism. At the same time, as a gifted woman who was exposed to contemporary social movements, Takamure was not able to be content with conforming to the expectations of this role. The power of the conflict within Takamure's own mind between her socialized need to fulfill her role as wife, and her consciousness of the self-sacrifice this role demands, is exceptionally clear in the above passage, as well as in many other

entries in her autobiography.

Resolution

Although almost a year after the diary entry above, on September 19, 1925, Takamure finally did leave Kenzo. The situation with Kenzo was beyond even her nature to bear. She left out of her frustration with Kenzo's inability to recognize and sympathize with her unhappiness. When she left, with no more notice than a farewell note, Kenzo was frantic and came to a realization of his own faults, feeling genuine remorse. When Takamure was made aware of this change in Kenzo, she returned home immediately.

As seen in her above diary entry, confronted with the conflict between traditional gender roles and her own needs, Takamure vowed to try even harder to be a good wife. Takamure blamed herself, not Kenzo, for the conflict which she felt pulling at her. In "*te no de no shi*" ["Leaving Home Poem"], published within weeks of her return home, Takamure describes her decision to leave home in the context of the oppression of the marriage system.

People consider what
I have done
In terms of reproach and criticism.
For parents and seniors there is
Shame, disappointment, disillusionment.

But I must declare this now:
All the things that I have done are
All the things that we women must do.

The irrationality of the private property
system
Is heavily borne by the propertyless
proletarian.
The irrationality of the marriage system
Is heavily borne by women.

Women's true consciousness
Isn't expressed in reforming the marriage system;
It is in demanding the abolition of the marriage system.

(Tsurumi, p. 7)

Inspired by the feminist declaration, "In the beginning, woman was the sun," Takamure's desire to verify Hiratsuka Raicho's feminist claim through "scientific" arguments

became increasingly intense. It was a desire forbidden for women at the time. Takamure wanted to dedicate herself to writing on her ideas that the development of modern theories on women was dependent upon an understanding of women's history, and that theories on love were influenced by the history of marriage. On her New Year's cards of 1930, she outlined her ideas and her plans to begin her research. Yet, when, faced with an offer from Kenzo's comrade to edit an anarchist women's journal, Takamure reluctantly turned to the social problems of the propertyless class as Japan started its modernization, mechanization and imperialism.

At this point, faced with an opportunity she later describes in her autobiography as a burden, Takamure was torn between beginning her own research and supporting Kenzo's enthusiasm for the anarchist movement. Although her understanding of anarchism was weak, pressure from Kenzo enabled her to dedicate herself with determination to this cause. Much like her diary entries above, Takamure is again influenced by her need to fulfill Kenzo.

Due in part to Takamure's lack of commitment, the journal, *Fujin Sensen* [Women's Front], died a natural death in June, 1931, after eleven issues. In July of that year, Takamure and Kenzo left Tokyo for an outlying rural area, where Takamure at last began her research on women.

Takamure's desire to do her own research had long been tempered by her need to please and fulfill Kenzo. Although this conflict between Takamure's own needs and her feeling of duty as a wife had been vented more than once when she ran away from Kenzo, this conflict had long continued within her. Beginning with their move to the countryside in 1931, there is a dramatic change as Kenzo begins to make the sacrifices, dedicating himself to the success of Takamure's scholastic endeavors according to the following pledge:

Your genius is extraordinary. It is rare. It is a gift from above. I have come to see that with my own eyes. It is not only your genius, but the endless purity of your character. Your unique ability and your mission, which has built up within you these long months and years, is the organization of women's history. I will support you.

(*Hi no Kuni*, p. 240-241)

Upon making this pledge, Kenzo built Takamure a house in the woods, which she

entered to embark upon her research when she was thirty-seven. In their "house in the woods," Takamure began the thirty years of her historical research being supported by Kenzo. The whole house was designed around her work except a small kitchen and other spaces for basic needs. Kenzo, having worked for publishing companies, acted as a very capable assistant to Takamure, looking for reference books and editing her writings. He even attended feminist meetings in her place in order to enable Takamure to concentrate on her research without interruption while maintaining a link, through Kenzo, between herself and other feminists and support groups. After years of conflict and struggle, Takamure and Kenzo were able to achieve a resolution which allowed them to share an egalitarian relationship in which Takamure was able to fulfill her potential as a scholar.

Conclusion

The present study of the life of Takamure highlights how the dichotomy between traditional gender roles and modern women's aspirations can cause crippling conflicts. In Takamure's case this role conflict is of particular interest since it so obviously contradicts her feminism. Her struggle to reconcile both her own and Kenzo's traditional upbringing and socialization with her own life choices shows how pervasive this conflict can be.

Takamure's diary entries, quoted above, illustrate her internal struggle, and her temptation to simply accept the traditional female role as the path of least resistance. Ultimately, unable to resolve this role conflict, Takamure chose to literally run away from her problems by leaving Kenzo. In the end, Takamure's solution led to resolution by convincing Kenzo to change.

In the 1970's and 80's, Japanese women fought for equal opportunities. As a result, we see a great number of women working in professions that have traditionally been considered male. However, 63 years after Kenzo's pledge to support Takamure, the continued perception that women are naturally suited to caregiving and housework means that many professional women always have two jobs, one inside and the other outside the home. The emancipation of women is not a one-way street. As women move out into public life, men must also begin to shoulder the burden in the home. As Takamure's case shows, it was only with the support of Kenzo

in the home that she was able to resolve the conflict between both roles.

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